

Bradley Farm Trail

Mount Greylock State Reservation

SELF-GUIDED INTERPRETIVE TRAIL



Rugged Mountainside Farms

Between 1765-1865 the slopes of Mount Greylock were farmed more than anytime before or since, home to no fewer than 42 farms. Place names across the mountain recall these previous farmers: Rounds, Northrup, Jones and Wilbur. The forested slopes of today obscure the cellar holes and once vibrant lives of these pioneering folk.

Early settlers to this area had an ordeal ahead of them clearing and improving their land. In many cases they carved out a subsistence living on “100 odd acres more or less.” Remnants of stonewalls, cleared while plowing, remain today as evidence of previous use of the land. Stonewall fences often separated orchards of apple and pear trees from fields of grain, corn, potatoes, peas, beans, pumpkins, hops, hemp, turnips and hayfields. Where the rocky soil was tough to farm and pasturing of livestock animals was more common. Pigs and cows were fattened for market, sheep raised for wool.

With poor dirt roads these farming families were often isolated from the “bottom dwellers” in the valley, learning to be self-sufficient. Yet they often had close ties to neighboring mountain farms, critical to surviving harsh winters; they bartered and traded goods and sometimes land with each other.

The Bradley Farm

The Visitors Center and surrounding Reservation lands were once the farm of the Bradley Family. William Bradley (1730–1809) a native of Connecticut, was a prominent founder of the town of Lanesborough, acquiring this land about 1762. The land transferred to his son, Capt. Ephraim Bradley (1752-1824), in 1787. Ephraim continued to expand the farm by buying up smaller farms until he had 300 acres by 1800. Although closer to the valley, he probably had many business dealings with farmers further up “Saddle Mountain.”

It often took two generations to clear land for plowing crops: first to clear the trees, second to remove the stones. By looking at the amount of rocks still scattered in this area between stonewalls, it appears Ephraim most probably had cleared the trees and used these upland slopes as pasture for livestock. He used the more arable land closer to the valley for his crops.

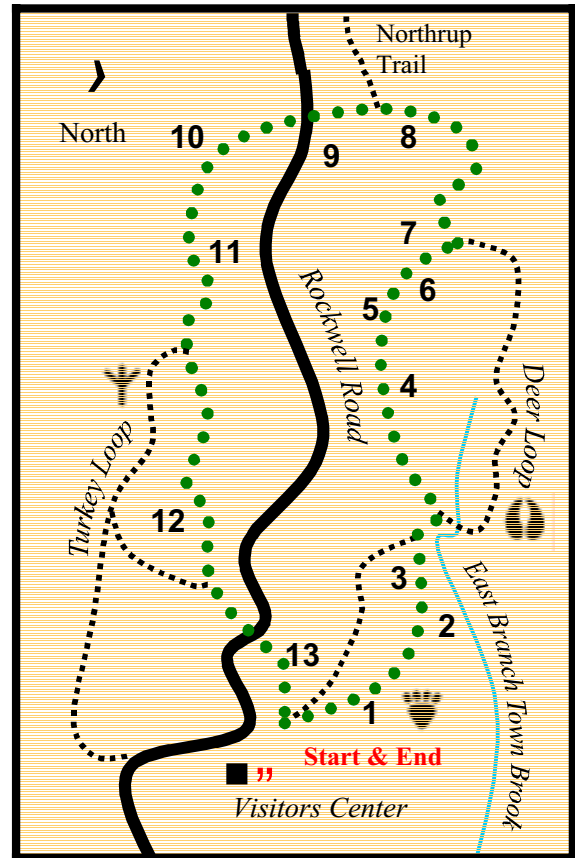
About the Trail

Beginning and ending at the northeast corner of the Visitors Center parking lot, the Bradley Farm Trail is relatively easy for hiking and cross-country skiing. The route overlaps parts of the *Brook n' Berry* and *Cliff Trails*; two optional loops are blazed with deer and turkey tracks (see map). Total length is 1.8 miles. Plan on spending about 90 minutes if hiking at a moderate pace.

Follow the blue bear paw trail blazes.



- Please stay on designated trails.
- Leave only footprints take only picture.
- Observe all posted rules and regulations.
- Be aware of hunting seasons and wear blaze orange when appropriate.
- **For foot and ski traffic only.**



Bradley Farm Trail ●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●●
Other trails

1) Ancient Orchard: Notice the stunted scraggly trees around you? These are the remnants of Ephraim Bradley's once proud apple orchard. Ephraim is long gone, and animals now tend to his crop of sweet fruit.

The brightly colored, sweet smelling flowers attract pollinating insects to them year after year. Once pollinated, the ovary of the flower begins to grow into a small green "ball." Over the summer months it grows bigger until the fall, when it matures into a sweet apple.

Apples lure wildlife, such as deer, to the trees. The animals in turn spread the seeds in their droppings. This process happens year after year and the orchard continues to grow!

2) Deepening Valleys: Over hundreds to thousands of years water has deepened this ravine, carrying soil and pebbles along with it, carving it even deeper. Vegetation slows erosion by holding on to the soil with its roots.

Watersheds are geographic basins that collect and funnel water. This brook is in the Housatonic River Watershed. Water not absorbed by the ground ends up flowing into the river, which eventually empties into the Long Island Sound, almost 130 miles away.

3) Labor of Love: This stonewall is a remnant of Ephraim Bradley's farm. Built with rocks that turned up while plowing fields, Bradley and his family created this wall most likely to mark the edge of a field or as a property boundary.

Stonewalls were also used for containing livestock. Between c.1807-1870 the land probably pastured huge flocks of Spanish Merino sheep, important to the wool economy of the region. As the local agricultural economy shifted and declined after the Civil War period, open fields had again returned to forests by the early 1900s.

4) Once Beauty, Now Beast: This old maple tree was mature when this was open farmland over 130 years ago. Its one live branch is only a fraction of the magnificent crown, now rotting on the forest floor. Organisms of decay are beginning to recycle this tree even before it's completely dead, creating soil for new growth. A young seedling is taking advantage of this process by growing out of the top of the trunk.

5) Forest Intersection: Look right, now left. See a difference? To the right is an Eastern Hemlock forest stand. Beneath its dense canopy little light reaches the ground; not much undergrowth can survive here. Young hemlocks find light to grow and compete well with other hemlocks. Notice how it feels cooler in the shade of this forest.

To the left is an eastern hardwood forest. Light gets through to the under-story here allowing a diversity of plant life the opportunity to grow.

6) Trees Company: Here's a sensory activity you can touch. Trees grouped here are Sugar Maple, Black Cherry and White Ash. Can you tell the difference by looking? How about by touching the bark? White Ash has uniform ridges and deep diamond shaped furrows. It feels like cork. Black Cherry is like giant cornflakes; and Sugar Maple has narrow scaly ridges and is hard. Look at the leaves too.

Competition for space between trees often affects their growth. What could have allowed these mature trees to grow so large, so close together?

7) Rock Hard: one of the oldest rocks that crops up in the Greylock massif is Quartzite. It's an opaque, white colored rock. Quartzite can be found around the mountain as whole rocks or as streaks through other rock types. Here it is imbedded within schist. Can you find other examples along the trail?

8) Just a Youngin': Here the forest is reclaiming old open farmland. This is the first stage of forest succession. Wildlife is abundant here because food is easy to find. Thick groundcover provides hiding places from predators.

Pioneer trees, birches, beech, maples, and White Pine have little competition, allowing them to spread out their crowns. As this young forest matures competition among trees will increase, restricting growth and reducing groundcover.

9) Pinecone Johnnies: Originally built in 1906-7, the Rockwell Road was improved upon and paved during the 1930s Great Depression by the 107th Company of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC gave rise to the saying "*another day, another dollar.*" They earned \$30 a month, most of which went home to help their family.

The CCC developed many of the facilities still in use today at Mt. Greylock including Bascom Lodge, the expert class Thunderbolt (Ski) Trail and Thunderbolt Shelter.

10) Black Death: To your right are two large Black Cherry trees infected with a disease known as Black Knot, common to cherry species in the U.S. A fungus that

infects young, succulent twigs spreads Black Knot disease. The fungal spores are produced on living galls one to several years old spreading over time to new parts of the tree. If untreated, Black Knot will eventually kill the tree.

11) Lightning Strikes!: A nearby Black Cherry tree bears the scars of an unfortunate encounter with lightning. The electrical current followed the trunk of the tree and eventually made its way in to the root system. Observing where the bark has been blown off you can see the lightning's route.

12) Evergreens of the Forest Floor: On the ground notice the patches of mosses. Princess Pine and Club Moss can be found on the west side of the trail with Running Pine on the east. Although their name includes pine, these plants aren't trees, they're mosses. Mosses act as a carpet for the forest floor, holding in moisture for plants and insects.

13) Forest Health: You are standing in the middle of a Continuous Forest Inventory plot. All trees within a 105 foot diameter are marked and given a number. Every 5 to 10 years foresters visit the plot and record the species' size, new significant-sized trees, diseases of the marked trees. This data allows scientists to determine the health of the forest and how to manage the it in the future.

We hope you enjoyed this self-guided tour.

Greylock at a Glance

Mount Greylock is rich in both nature and history. In 1898 it became the first state reservation in Massachusetts. It is the highest point in the state at 3,491 feet above sea level containing a diversity of flora and fauna. Greylock has captured the imagination man for generations. Today with over 12,500 acres and 70 miles of trails it is a destination for recreation and reflection.

The Bradley Farm Trail and interpretive brochure were created in 2002 by Student Conservation Association interns Brian Bodah and Victoria Estok. We wish to extend our thanks to Mr. Mike Whalen of Lanesborough, MA for all of his generous help with the project. This project was funded through a grant from the Fields Pond Foundation, administered by the Appalachian Mountain Club.

The Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) sponsors the Student Conservation Association in Massachusetts. For more information contact SCA at: (413) 339-6631.

MOUNT GREYLOCK STATE RESERVATION

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